

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

The courtesy extended by the Examiner in conducting an interview with Applicant's attorney is greatly appreciated.

All of Claims 1-37 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) or 35 USC §103(c) in view of a patent to Truhan, either alone or in combination with other references. The Official Action states that the Truhan patent discloses a system that, "has a work surface 200 disposed in the sealed area and air being suctioned downwardly through the work surface". Applicant's attorney pointed out at the interview that the work surface 200 of Truhan does not have air suctioned downwardly therethrough, and the Examiner agreed that this is the correct interpretation of Truhan.

FIGS. 3 and 6 of Truhan illustrate two plates having perforations therein, however, these are not used as the work surface 200. Rather, these are two configurations for the plenum 26, 106 through which air enters the sealed chamber. There is no explicit disclosure as to the construction of the work surface however, portions of the Truhan disclosure evidence that air is not drawn through the work surface. At Column 4, lines 26-36, the Truhan patent states:

[w]hile the air enters the controlled zone at a rate of, for example, 50 to 100 linear feet per minute, air movement immediately adjacent to the surface of the work table is practically undetectable by operators stationed about the table. Notwithstanding, the almost undetectable nature of the air movement, exhaled breath, and particles from the body of the operator are moved downwardly and outwardly to exhausts through outlet chambers 114 and 116 ...[see FIG. 5] (emphasis added)

As such, it is clear that Truhan makes no provision to have air drawn through the work surface in his system. Accordingly, the Truhan patent neither anticipates the claims as currently presented, nor does it, whether alone or in combination with other references, render obvious the present invention.

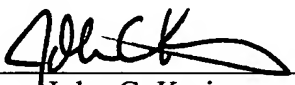
The Examiner essentially agreed, in the interview, that the current rejections, which all rely on the Truhan reference as teaching the claim limitation directed to having air suctioned downwardly through the work surface, could not be maintained. Withdrawal of all outstanding rejections is thus respectfully requested.

The Examiner advised in the interview that a further search of the prior art might be conducted. Applicant strongly urges the Examiner to review all prior responses and arguments presented relative to the references previously cited in rejecting the claims. All previous rejections have been overcome, and the references cited in these rejections should have represented the closest prior art found in earlier searches. Applicant strongly believes that its invention is novel and is not obvious, and is therefore entitled to patent protection as set forth in the claims as currently presented.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of all rejections is respectfully requested. Passage of the application to issue at an early date is earnestly solicited. The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned should any issues remain which require resolution prior to allowance and issue.

Respectfully,

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